

The Puerto Ricans at Carlisle Indian School

Sonia M. Rosa

Introduction

In the last two years of the nineteenth century and opening years of the twentieth, victorious in the Spanish American War, the U.S. government approved a series of grants and actions aimed at “Americanizing” the residents of their newest possession, Puerto Rico. In the process, at least 60 Puerto Rican children were sent to be re-educated at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where the motto was, “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Founded in 1878 by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the purpose of the Carlisle School was to create a new mainstream identity for Indians, to change them into something “acceptable” for the society of the times.

It all began after the Indian Wars, when Captain Pratt was put in charge of a group of Indian prisoners who had been virtually exiled to Florida. There, Pratt engaged in reform practices still followed today in our prison system. He made certain that the Indians at Ft. Marion lived regimented lives—they had to work, learn to read and write in English, learn a trade, follow a strict military discipline, and even wear uniforms. After several years, and by an act of Congress, the Indian prisoners of war were pardoned. But some of them had no place to go and decided to stay with Pratt. Pratt developed a plan to “better” them and other Indians. [1]

First Pratt took his group of ex-convicts to Hampton Institute in Virginia, an institution for the children of ex-slaves. After intense lobbying, Pratt convinced the U.S. government to give him the run-down facilities of Carlisle Barracks, located in Carlisle, PA. Congress funded his project. The money allocated for it came from the “civilization fund.” While preparing the school, Pratt simultaneously engaged in a strong recruitment effort. His candidates for the Indian School were the elite children of the conquered tribes. He traveled to talk in person to chiefs. He held long meetings to convince them that the survival of their tribes lay in the ability of a new generation to learn the American way. He stressed the need to learn to read and write English in order to maintain truthful communication with the white man. His strategy was old as humanity, where the conqueror takes the children of the conquered, educates the new generation, and creates future leaders loyal to the new government. [2]

Several important U.S. leaders were convinced by Pratt, as well as Indian leaders, and he returned to his new school with his precious cargo of Indian royalty. The school was a work in progress, and Pratt pushed on with his project, even though the youngsters under his care suffered. [3]

Everyday life at the Carlisle Industrial Indian School was totally regimented. A strict schedule was followed. The newly arrived youngsters were forbidden to speak their native languages, and their physical appearance was transformed the moment they stepped into the school. All Indian regalia was discarded and late nineteenth century attire

was handed to them to put on. The boys' long hair was cut short and in some cases the girls' long hair was also cut. The children were taught to read and write English, were motivated to join a Protestant Christian denomination, and were given vocational training in such areas as farming, baking, printing, shoemaking, etc. [4]

The students' formal education was completed with an "outing" system. The students were sent out to live with local families for several months of the year. The stated purpose was to teach them to live and emulate the American life, but many of them were treated as servants and given no positive education—just shame came from the experience. It is important to mention, however, that some of the students were well treated and lived as members of the local family. [5]

The Spanish American War

By the end of the Indian Wars, the U.S. government had its eyes on the Caribbean. The sinking of the Maine, an event that is still a mystery to this date, unleashed what the U.S. leaders had wanted for a long time, an excuse to fight the Spaniards and expand into the Caribbean. Teddy Roosevelt called the Spanish American War "a splendid little war." Cuba and Puerto Rico were conquered in record time (although the Philippines was a different story). Victorious Americans came to the Caribbean, mostly for strategic, military, and economic reasons. Some of them came filled with prejudice about the people who inhabited the islands. The very name given to the Antilles—West Indies—conjured up images of cartoonish Indian "coolie" characters. The Americans found Puerto Rico impoverished because the Spanish Crown had abandoned it and because there was no middle class. Poor Puerto Ricans lived in thatched roof houses, although the upper classes lived in comfortable abundance (see Figure 1). [6]

Figure 1



Poor “barrio” in Aguadilla Puerto Rico circa 1899. Poverty was interpreted as inferiority by the U.S. invading forces.

Source: www.rootsweb.com/~prsanjua/phot_01.htm

Even educated blacks in the U.S. thought that the inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands were inferior. Booker T. Washington stated his interest in educating the Cubans and Puerto Ricans and, after the fact, mentioned the “elevating” benefits of industrial education in a letter published in 1900:

In addition to the problem of educating eight million negroes in our Southern States and in grafting them into American citizenship, we now have the additional responsibility, either directly or indirectly, of educating and elevating about eight hundred thousand others of African descent in Cuba and Porto Rico, to say nothing of the white people of these islands, many of whom are in a condition about as deplorable as that of the negroes. We have, however, one advantage in approaching the question of the education of our new neighbors. The experience that we have passed through in the Southern States during the last thirty years in the education of my race, whose history and needs are not very different from the history and needs of the Cubans and Porto Ricans, will prove most valuable in elevating the blacks of the West Indian Islands. To tell what has already been accomplished in the South under most difficult circumstances is to tell what may be done in Cuba and Porto Rico. [7]¹

The expansion of the United States grew after the Spanish American War, to the dismay of many citizens who strongly criticized the government, as we can see in the editorial cartoons of the times. It was at this historical juncture that the destinies of the African Americans, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans collided. [8]

The Amigos

A small group of men were the architects of the idea to send Puerto Rican children to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, an almost forgotten chapter of Puerto Rican history and colonialism. Richard Henry Pratt, John Eaton, and Nelson Miles knew each other well. They had served in the U.S. Army and all rose through the ranks by using a mixture of intelligence, leadership, and effort. They had in common their service in the Civil War and Indian Wars, and were in charge of Indian scout units as well as Buffalo Soldier units.

Pratt convinced leaders of the U.S. government of the worthiness of his social experiment with the children of Indian chiefs. [9]

Meanwhile Eaton, who was a star, rapidly rose through the government ranks and went from being Director of the Freedman and Slaves Bureau, to Director of Indian Affairs, and then was called upon to organize a new Bureau of Education. The life of Miles, who was once described as a “brave peacock,” was full of controversy, basically because he was loud and opinionated, and because he betrayed his Indian scouts. But he was influential. After the Spanish American War, Miles invited Eaton to be the first Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico. Eaton’s stay in Puerto Rico was short, but his radical changes to the education system in Puerto Rico still remain today. [10]

Eaton was the moving intellectual force behind the plan to Americanize the Puerto Ricans using an off-shoot of Pratt’s Carlisle Plan that was already in place for the Indians. He was a close personal friend of Richard H. Pratt; his frequent visits to Carlisle Indian School are well documented in the school’s newspaper, *The Indian Helper*. As first Secretary of Education of Puerto Rico, the Carlisle Scholarship Program was Eaton’s brainchild. He was unable to put it into full motion, however, because of serious health problems that forced him to leave the island very soon after his arrival. His successor, Dr. Martin Grove Brumbaugh (1901), was the one who really implemented the program. [11]

Brumbaugh knew where he was sending the Puerto Rican youngsters because he was a native of Pennsylvania and later became governor of that state. Brumbaugh used the same proven program developed by Pratt and approached the elite families of Puerto Rico—the majority of the youngsters sent to Carlisle were the children of the upper class families of Puerto Rico, the children of the leaders, the children of the caciques. Brumbaugh used a one-on-one personal approach, with arguments about the advantages of educating their kids or losing them due to ignorance of the new system, to convince the landowners and

professionals of Puerto Rico to send their children to participate in the scholarship program at the Carlisle School. [12]

The philosophy behind sending the children of elite Puerto Ricans to Carlisle School was the same one that Pratt stated in 1882: "...the school serves a double purpose—first as an educating influence on those who are here and second as an educating and controlling influence."² These men—Pratt, Eaton, Miles, and Brumbaugh—joined forces and put together a plan to “civilize” the Puerto Ricans. [13]

The Puerto Rican Youngsters at Carlisle Indian School

The story of these youngsters is not told in history books and until recently only a handful of people knew about the so-called “Porto Rican Indians.” While researching for my Master’s degree thesis, I stumbled onto this almost forgotten chapter of Puerto Rican History. First Gina Rosario mentioned the story to me and then she steered me in the direction of Jorge Estevez (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian), who generously shared with me his knowledge and some of his research. The facts were there—a group of sixty plus Puerto Rican youngsters were sent to the city of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to an Indian industrial boarding school—but the picture was not very clear (see Figure 2). [14]

Figure 2



Questions kept recurring while reading about the school's history and the Puerto Rican youngsters who were sent there. These questions included:

1. Who were these Puerto Rican youngsters?
2. Who sent them to Carlisle?
3. Who paid for their education?
4. Why Carlisle?
5. Were these youngsters Taíno Indians?
6. What kind of lives did they have after leaving Carlisle? [15]

As I sought the answers to these questions, a series of human stories began to unfold. Several answers were to be found within the records kept at the National Archives (NARA, folio 75). Carlisle itself also has many records with enlightening information about those Puerto Rican students including, in many cases, long letters answering surveys sent by the school to inform the superintendent of Carlisle about their lives after leaving the institution. Another part of the story came from three articles published in the U.S. and Puerto Rican press, and from the school's newspaper. [16]

Not long after their arrival at Carlisle, the parents of the students who had been selected to go there began receiving letters from their children about the bad conditions at the

school, to the parents' great surprise. Several of those parents approached the well known leader and politician Luis Muñoz Rivera: [17]

One of the most famous men in the political history of Puerto Rico, Luis Muñoz Rivera [see Figure 3] devoted his life to the struggle for the political autonomy of Puerto Rico. In 1901, while living in New York, Muñoz Rivera established the Puerto Rican Herald, a bilingual newspaper. Muñoz Rivera returned to Puerto Rico in 1904 and became one of the founders of the Unionist Party. In 1906 he was elected to the House of Delegates as a Unionist and was twice reelected, serving until 1910, when he was elected Resident Commissioner to the U.S. House of Representatives. [18]³

Figure 3



Luis Muñoz-Rivera was a well known Puerto Rican political figure. Several parents contacted him with complaints about Carlisle Indian School, after reading the complaints he went personally to inspect the school. His findings were published in the New York Newspaper The Puerto Rican Herald in 1901. Source: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/munoz.html>

Muñoz Rivera went to visit the Carlisle Indian Industrial School to find out for himself and the concerned parents what the conditions there were like. In the Puerto Rican Herald, he wrote about his visit in August 1901:[19]

The letters of diverse students and their parents, from several places of the island, gave me a firm impression that the education was very bad and the food was detestable at the Indian School. Since I went there without any other purpose than rectifying or verifying those impressions, I asked each student individually about their personal experiences. All agreed with both extremes: "...here we eat bad and we are not well." [20]⁴

Apparently there had been a general perception among the Puerto Rican parents that they were sending their children to the school to receive a higher education. Muñóz Rivera addressed that lie. He wrote [21]:

Those who thought that their sons and daughters would become doctors, lawyers or architects were deceived. Some say that those careers were available to them in Puerto Rico. I resist admitting that Mr. Brumbaugh, whom I hold as an intelligent educator and serious person, had promised things that in reality could not be true. If those offers were to be confirmed, then a grave charge would result against the department of education. [22]⁵

Muñóz Rivera offered to take the kids back home, but the youngsters took a vote and decided to stay. One might infer that they wanted to return to Puerto Rico triumphant. Two revealing documents are articles written by Angela Rivera-Tudó and Dr. Juan José Osuna, two Puerto Ricans who, as youths, were students sent to Carlisle. Rivera-Tudó's article is titled "The Puerto Rican Indians." Here are some excerpts from what, at first sight, appears to be a simple invitation to a high school reunion [23]:

Only those of us who went and experienced the misfortunes of this kind of experience in adolescence, since most of us had graduated from eighth grade as did others soon after their arrival in that land [the United States], I repeat, only we can attest to the suffering. [24]⁶

Rivera-Tudó explains in detail her anguish and goes on to defend the worthiness of the Puerto Rican students sent to Carlisle: [25]

I have always been an independent spirit. For me, the situation amounted to an unforgivable injustice, abusive treatment by our [U.S.] "masters," directed to denigrating Puerto Ricans further, by their choosing the only college they had for educating and civilizing the savage Redskin Indians for also educating and "civilizing" the wretched Puerto Ricans. And, to make matters worse, those of us who were there represented the best that Puerto Rico had. Tangible proof of this is that in spite of these unpleasant and foreboding beginnings, all or most of us have made positive contributions to our Motherland and have not shown any rancor toward Americans since not all of them are equally guilty of the harm one of them did to us. [26]⁷

Dr. Juan José Osuna, a leading scholar and Puerto Rican educator, wrote about his misfortunes in Carlisle in the scholarly journal *Summer School Review* in 1932. Probably he wrote it after the reunion at Angela Rivera-Tudó's house. His words paint a detailed picture of how he manipulated the outing system to stay out of Carlisle:[27]

I worked there for the summer and went to school during the academic year of 1901-1902. Of the rest of my companions, some stayed like myself to work and study; some ran away and returned to Puerto Rico; and the parents of the well to do either sent for their children or transferred them to other schools. We were a very disappointed lot. I had decided to become a lawyer, but I did not see that in this school I would ever get nearer my goal. [28]⁸

It is sad and poignant to read his description of how he was treated [29]:

As I was different from the Indians and also somewhat different from the Americans, I became a curiosity. On Sunday afternoons, people from all over that section of the country that came purposely to see Miss Mira's new boy visited the place. They had heard that he was not an Indian, that he had come from Puerto Rico; and they wanted to see what Puerto Ricans looked like. [30]⁹

Osuna closes his article by telling us about his last days as a Carlisle alumnus: [31]

In the spring of 1905, I received a letter reminding me that I was still a Carlisle student, but that the authorities felt that I was advanced enough to graduate from the institution and sever my relationship with the Federal Government. ... I went to Carlisle, attended commencement; ... I received a diploma of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. I graduated with the class of 1905; I am an alumnus of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. I am an Indian in spite of myself. [32]¹⁰

These newspaper articles show one side of Carlisle, but the documents found at NARA show another perspective. The first set of documents, created when the students first arrived at the school, was the Descriptive and Historical Record of the Students (see Figure 4). These consisted of cards that included such data as: [33]

- 1) Name
- 2) Parents name
- 3) Nation
- 4) Blood (Quantum)
- 5) Age at arrival
- 6) Date of arrival
- 7) Date of departure
- 8) Reason for departure
- 9) Height
- 10) Weight

Figure 4

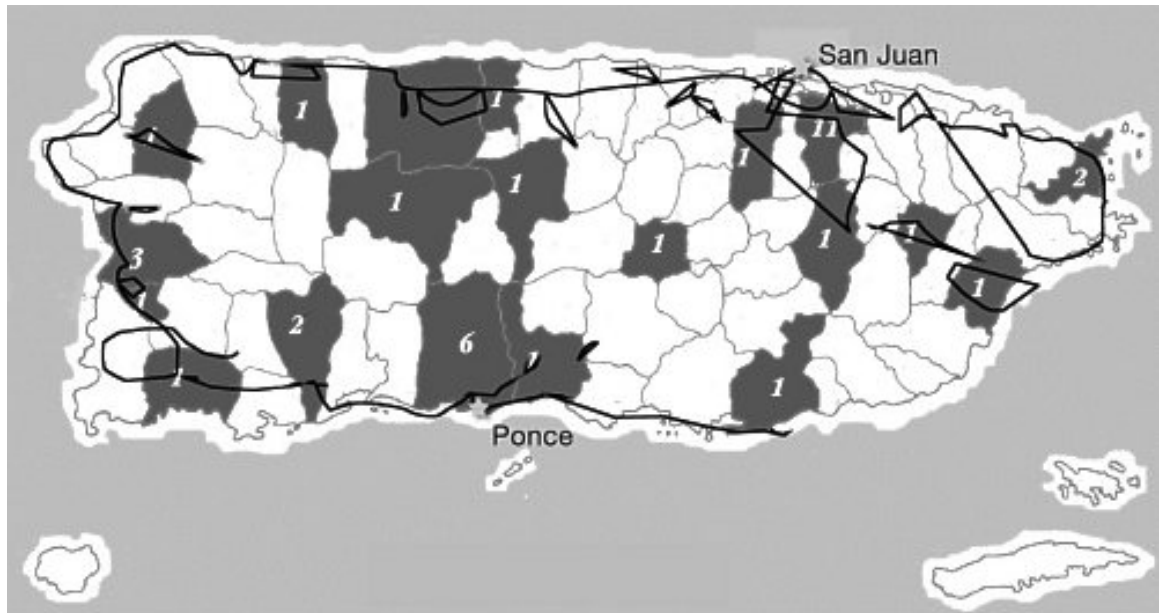
CARLISLE INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.
DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL RECORD OF STUDENT.

1376

NUMBER 2677	ENGLISH NAME Rafael Gaudier	AGENCY	NATION Porto Rican					
SAND	INDIAN NAME	HOME ADDRESS Francisco Gaudier, Mayaguez P.R.						
PARENTS LIVING OR DEAD		BLOOD	AGE	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	FORCED EMP.	FORCED EMP.	SEX
FATHER: <i>Living</i>	MOTHER: <i>Living</i>	Full	17	5-3	115	31	28	M
ARRIVED AT SCHOOL May 2 1901		FOR WHAT PERIOD	DATE DISCHARGED Nov 1st 1902		CAUSE OF DISCHARGE Ran from school on Oct 12 1902			
TO COUNTRY	PATRONS NAME AND ADDRESS				FROM COUNTRY			
	Jesuit, 22 Blase, Maple, Lawrenceville, N. J.				Sept. 1-5 02			

Using the information provided on the individual student records and some of the letters written by the students, I created a database that provides a partially detailed picture of who these youngsters were. Some of the interesting facts include: [34]

1. A group of at least sixty "boricuas" were sent to Carlisle Indian School. (Probably the group reached one hundred.)
2. Under the "tribe" category, the word "Porto Rican" was written.
3. The first Puerto Rican arrived in 1899.
4. The Puerto Ricans who went to Carlisle were from the following municipalities: San Juan (11), Ponce (6), Mayaguez (3), Yauco (2), and Fajardo (2). There were also one each from the following cities and towns: Guayama, Utuado, Cabo Rojo, Hatillo, Bayamón, Caguas, Arecibo, Juncos, Lajas, Quebradillas, Aguadilla, Ciales, Barceloneta, Humacao, Juana Díaz, Barranquitas, Ensenada, Yauco. If you follow the names of the municipalities and place them on a map of Puerto Rico, you can see the route of old Puerto Rico Road Number Two or the Military Road. Also you can follow the route of the train that ran parallel to that road (see map at right).



5. At least five of the young Puerto Ricans ran away: Santiago Montano, Cástulo Rodríguez, Luis Sanchez, Antonio Pagán, and Rafael Gaudier.
6. Parents requested the return of eleven students.
7. The youngest Puerto Rican sent to Carlisle was twelve years old. Her name was Olimpia Morales. The average age of the kids sent was 15.33 years old.
8. Some of the kids were orphans or had only one parent.
9. In my records, I have the names of 17 of the girls and 35 of the boys.
10. There seems to be confusion in the use of surnames, probably because of the Americans' lack of understanding of the Hispanic tradition of using both surnames.
11. The students arrived in small groups. A group of eleven youngsters from Puerto Rico arrived at Carlisle Indian School on May 2, 1901. The group was made up of ten boys and one girl. On May 21, 1901, another large group of youngsters arrived from the island. The group was made up of four boys and eight girls. A total of 37 youngsters arrived at Carlisle Indian School during 1901.
12. Concebida Duchesne was orphaned and thirteen years old at the time she arrived. Her record mentions that she was adopted by her patrons.
13. A group of three (maybe more) of the Puerto Rican Carlisle students joined the "Porto Rican Provisional Regiment" and were the first islanders who rose to the ranks of officers in the U.S. Army.
14. Miguel de Jesús, María M. Castro, and Felícita Medina were 18 years old when they arrived at Carlisle.
15. Delores Nieves was classified as a "Negro-Puerto Rican." After her departure, she wrote several letters on behalf of an orphaned child. She asked the administration to accept the boy at Carlisle. Her request was denied.
16. Vicente Figueroa stayed in Carlisle and married Louise Taylor. There are several letters from him to Carlisle.
17. J.A.E. Rodríguez's letters to the Carlisle Indian School had the letterhead of the San Juan Baseball Grounds. The letterhead describes him as president and

treasurer of the San Juan Baseball Grounds, making him an important part of Puerto Rican baseball history (see letter at right).

A. E. Rodriguez,
President & Treasurer.

N. L. Soto,
Manager.

A. C. Pérez,
Secretary.

THE SAN JUAN BASE BALL GROUNDS ASSOCIATION.

BALL PARK AT
Puerto de Tierra.
Stop 8.

P. O. BOX 225

POST ADDRESS:

"Rosops"

San Juan, P. R., June 10, 1913.

Mr. M. Friedman,
Supt. Carlisle Indian School,
Carlisle, Penna.

My dear Mr. Friedman:

Some days ago there came to my office a young man by the name of Luis O. Varela to ask me certain questions regarding the School. I told him what the school was and also told him what my time in said school did for me. At his request I am writing this to ask you if it would be possible to admit him there free of any charge. While I have not known him for such a long time I am told by persons closely associated with him that he is a fine boy.

I note from your last catalogue that you have me as employed with the railroad company. I wish to state that for the last four years I have not been connected with said company but have been employed by the Insular Government of Porto Rico in the Office of the Auditor as an Expert Accountant with a compensation of \$2,000.00 per annum and a per diem of \$2.50 when on the road.

With best regards to old friends at the dear old place and the best of success for Carlisle.

18. There is a letter that Providencia Martínez wrote to Carlisle mentioning how much her father suffered when he found out she was attending an Indian School.
19. Matilde Garnier wrote about the improvements in the educational system in Puerto Rico. She wrote in a letter dated 1911: “Porto Rico has improved a great deal since the Americans came up here.”
20. The letters written by the Puerto Ricans are very positive, thankful letters.
21. The majority of the kids belonged to elite families.
22. Some of the families still had close ties to Spain. [35]

The descendants of the Puerto Ricans at Carlisle

The fragmented picture painted by the letters and documents did not shed enough light on the students and their lives, so I started research on genealogies. I searched the Ellis Island records online, the Mormon records and every Puerto Rican genealogy site that I could access. I found scattered information. [36]

The first living relatives of the Carlisle Student I was able to find were the family of Elvira Vélez. Laura Irrizary answered my e-mail and painted a full picture of the Vélez Family. Francisco Vélez, Elvira’s father, was a landowner of a big sugar-cane plantation. He was rich and was elected mayor of Lajas, a town located in the southwest coast of PR, after the U.S. invasion. Besides Elvira, he also had two sons, whom he sent to study medicine in the U.S. at Georgetown University. After her return to Puerto Rico, Elvira married Gustavo Grana, and together they owned a pharmacy. One of her grandchildren has a genealogical website where he has posted her picture.¹¹ I held a very interesting conversation with her only surviving child, retired engineer Gustavo Grana. Elvira told her family that she went to high school in PA. Specifically, she mentioned Dickinson Prep School, but never mentioned Carlisle Indian School. [37]

Concebida Duchesne came from a very musically talented family. Her father was a known musician during Spanish rule and her brother Rafael Duchesne-Mondríguez was one of the great composers of la danza puertorriqueña. Concebida’s record at Carlisle mentions that she was adopted by her patrons. One of the surveys the school sent was answered by her patron, stating that she was studying to be a teacher and planning to return to Puerto Rico. She studied at Bloomsburg College, now Bloomsburg University. Her great grandnephew, a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Doctor Juan Duchesne, wrote: [38]

My father tells me that he knew of an “aunt Conci” that was a teacher in the U.S. He never saw her. He only remembers that his father Rafael (aunt Conci’s brother) would write to her often. Her letters would always be written in English. She would tell Rafael that “she had been converted into an American” and that she could no longer speak in Spanish nor live in Puerto Rico. That is what my father remembers. He referred me to my

Uncle Francisco whom I contacted immediately on the phone. Francisco, who is older than my father, remembers something more. He knows that Concebida (“titi Conci”) returned to Puerto Rico in the 20’s with another sister named Francisca. Both were English teachers. They taught in the countryside of San Lorenzo, where they traveled on mule to school. Not long afterwards, both returned to the mainland, maybe before 1930. Paquita relocated to Boston and Concebida went to Poughkeepsie, NY. Concebida never again returned to Puerto Rico. She married a radio announcer by the name of Joe Saldaña and she had a son. Both my uncle and father have a blind spot regarding Concebida’s youth and education. She only would say that she was in a special place where they “converted her into an American.” [39]¹²

Dr. Juan Duchesne writes about Concebida:

I asked if they knew of her schooling and they said they don’t have any idea. That topic was never spoken of in the family. When she arrived at the island to work as a teacher, they remember that it was somewhat shocking that she was a fervent Protestant, since they only knew Catholicism. My father says that it was said in the family that she was of a very dark skin, and that it made her stand out from the rest of her siblings. [40]¹³

Enrique Urrutia went to Carlisle even though his family had close ties to the Spanish Crown. His great aunt was the wife of Don Juan Dabán y Busterino, and her name was Doña María Catalina de Urrútia y Montoya of Habana, Cuba. Don Juan Dabán was:

The Inspector de las Tropas in Cuba when he was charged to take over as Gobernador and Capitan Gen. of Puerto Rico in 1783. He came to the island with his wife, Doña Maria Catalina de Urrutia y Montoya Spain.¹⁴

Peter Reilly, grandnephew of Urrutia, wrote: “The family has a rich military history and, in fact, was prominent in governing and protecting much of Spain’s lands in the New World from the 17th century up to the Spanish-American War”.¹⁵ Jorge Urrutia, another nephew, wrote: “I met Tía Pura and Tío Enrique in the late 1950’s in their plush San Patricio home before they left the island to live in the Washington D.C. area.” [41]¹⁶

Enrique Urrutia joined the Puerto Rico Provisional Regiment after leaving Carlisle. He was one of the first group of Puerto Rican officers in the U.S. Army and retired as a colonel after serving in both World Wars (see Figure 7). His son and grandson followed in his footsteps as officers of the U.S. Army. Enrique is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. I was able to trace the family of Enrique Urrutia, who never told his family that he went to Carlisle Indian Industrial School. [42]

Figure 7

First Lieutenant Enrique Urrutia , U.S.A., a Carlisle boy from Puerto Rico.

Enrique left Carlisle in 1905 after a term of four years and returned to his home in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He worked at his trade as printer for two years at \$30.00 dollars a week assisting in the supports of his mother and sister. During this time he attended night school.

He then took the Civil Service examination and received an appointment as clerk in Pay Department Navy Yard at seventy dollars per month. The next year he was promoted to eighty per month and the following year to ninety per month. While holding this position he continued his education and was prepared for examination for the Regular Army by Antonio Rodríguez, a Carlisle graduate.

He then took the examination then appointment to the Regular Army and in 1910 with three other Puerto Ricans received commissions as Second Lieutenants in the Regular Army. He passed number one among twenty-four candidates. He has served in the Regular Army since that time and has been promoted to be First Lieutenant.

Enrique, you have made good. Carlisle is proud of its Regular Army Officers.

There are three Nin families in Puerto Rico. All of them are very rich, with properties and intellectual success (lawyers, architects, etc.). Belén Nin, after going to Carlisle, spent several years in St. Mary's Seminary in PA. We don't know if she joined a religious order or was simply getting in touch with her Catholic roots after the Carlisle experience. Her family remembers her return to Puerto Rico and her shy demeanor. [43]

Juan José Osuna went to Carlisle and, as mentioned, manipulated the system to stay out of the Indian School. Osuna, a brilliant scholar, moved around until he was able to obtain his doctor's degree in Education. He returned to Puerto Rico, worked in the University of Puerto Rico, and was one of the co-founders of the University Editorial House, Editorial Universitaria. His highly acclaimed book, *A History of Education in Puerto Rico*, is a well researched, scholarly study of several hundred years of education on the island. There's even a high school in Caguas, Puerto Rico, named after him. [44]

Not all the Carlisle Puerto Rican stories had a happy ending. One of those is Pedro Enrique Musignac's story. The Musignac family owned the Salinas salt processing plant in Cabo Rojo, located in the southwestern coast of Puerto Rico. Nelliemar Musignac wrote: "He, or maybe a son with his same name, lost the Salinas one night while drinking and gambling." [45]¹⁷

Conclusion

After several years of researching the presence of a group of Puerto Ricans at Carlisle Indian School, I found the answers to my most compelling questions: Why were they sent to Carlisle? Who sent them? [46]

They were sent to Carlisle as part of a very structured and open program to Americanize the Puerto Ricans following the Spanish American War. Council Bill 12, enacted in 1901, the Puerto Rican Legislature Bill 21 (1901), and later on House Bill 35, provided for scholarship money for twenty men and women to study at technical industrial schools in the U.S. Just like Pratt did with the Indians, visiting their leaders and convincing them of the worthiness of sending them to Carlisle, Secretary of Education Dr. Martin Brumbaugh convinced leaders of the Puerto Ricans to send their kids not only to Carlisle Indian School but also to Tuskegee and Hampton, schools created to educate the ex-slaves, now traditional African American Schools. Youngsters from Cuba were sent to Hampton and Tuskegee, too. The Indians, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans were forcibly mainstreamed and education was used as a principle tool on the island of Puerto Rico as well as on the mainland: North American teachers arrived at the island with the sole purpose of teaching in English. It was the intent not only to substitute the language but also change the value system and ‘Americanize’ the Puerto Ricans through the educational process. [47]¹⁸

Edwin Grant Dexter, Commissioner of Education of Puerto Rico, wrote in his annual report: “In accordance to sections 68 to 77 of the school law of Puerto Rico a number of young men are being maintained in various schools and colleges in the United States at the expense of the government of Puerto Rico.” [48]¹⁹

José-Manuel Navarro poignantly calls the process the same thing that he titled his book, *Creating Tropical Yankees*. Navarro’s book presents in detail the history of education in Puerto Rico and how the schools were used openly for the Americanization of the masses. The U.S. government had no qualms, like many other conquerors have done after their conquest; in creating a cadre of acculturated, Americanized, and assimilated youngsters. Those youngsters who were educated in the U.S., and their descendants after them, were very successful after returning to Puerto Rico, and still surnames like Rexach, Padín, Duchesne, Seguí, Urrutia, Nin, Musignac, Orriola, Piñero, and Seijo are part of the intellectual, business, and political scene of the island.[49]

Samuel McCune Lindsay, Secretary of Education for Puerto Rico (1902), made a very poignant and, I believe, accurate statement in his annual report : “Colonization carried forward by the armies of war is vastly more costly than that carried forward by the armies of peace, whose outpost and garrisons are the public schools.” [50]²⁰

An important question remains: Were those kids who were sent to the Carlisle Industrial Indian School Taíno Indians? I believe that there is no right answer to that question. The Taínos had a sad yet surprising history. When the Spaniards came to the lands they inhabited in the Caribbean, the Taínos were expecting them, warned by a prophecy that told them they were going to receive the visit of white/dressed people who would kill them. The theory of the total extinction of the Taínos was repeated generation after

generation like a gospel in the Antilles, yet the truth is that the Taínos made themselves “invisible” to survive in the middle of the oppressive forces of the conquistadors. The latest DNA research performed by Dr. Juan Carlos Martínez-Cruzado proves the existence of that invisible nation among the Puerto Ricans today. In scientific testing that has been conducted during the last three years across the island, Taíno mitochondrial DNA is being found in an astonishing percentage of the Puerto Rican people. [51]

On the other hand, we have genealogy. Right now the genealogy of the Puerto Ricans whom I have been able to trace points to Spain. We need to remember that the history of the Taínos is oral and that genealogy is a document-filled endeavor. To get a direct, exact and correct answer as to whether or not those students who were sent to the Carlisle Industrial Indian School were Taíno Indians, we may need to use more technology. DNA technology that can read the complete spectrum of the hereditary genes probably will solve the riddle in the near future, when it is more easily available and more affordable. [52]

The issue here should not be the Indian-ness of the Puerto Ricans who were sent to Carlisle, but the fact that they were treated like the Indians. They were classified as inferiors and not as the equals of other American students. [53]

The legacy of Carlisle is filled with contradictions. Some students spoke of the horrors and the prison-like atmosphere of Carlisle, while others called it home and mentioned the school with fondness and warmth. Which were sincere? Were some suffering from a type of brainwashing or from the Stockholm Syndrome? Were they grateful for their professional successes? Mitchell Bush, president of the American Indian Society, said about the Indian school system: [54]

I’ve seen some of the more positive side. I think one thing it did for us is teach us English... we can all understand and communicate with you. [55]²¹

I would like to conclude by mentioning the text of the marker that was newly inaugurated on September 1, 2003, in front of the Carlisle Barracks Cemetery (see Figure 8 a,b, and c): [56]

This school was the model for a nationwide system of boarding schools intended to assimilate American Indians into mainstream culture. Over 10,000 indigenous children attended the school between 1879-1918. Despite idealistic beginnings, the school left a mixed and lasting legacy, creating opportunity for some students and conflicted identities for others. In this cemetery are 186 graves of students who died while at Carlisle. [57]²²

None of the students buried in the Carlisle Barracks Cemetery are Puerto Ricans. They were the lucky ones. They were able to return home, probably with opportunity in one hand and conflicted identities in the other. I strongly believe that the majority of the Puerto Rican kids, despite the pain, rose from the ashes stronger, and took the education given at Carlisle and used it constructively to create a new and better life for themselves

and their families. The Puerto Ricans at Carlisle Indian School left a legacy of resilience and strength. [58]

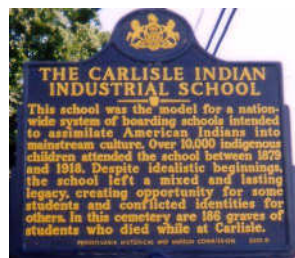
Figure 8 (a)



Figure 8 (b)



Figure 8 (c)



Notes

¹ Washington, Booker T. "Signs of progress among the negroes." 1900: 472-478.

² Pratt, Richard Henry. Pratt papers. Beinecke Library, Yale University.

³ Muñoz Rivera, Luis. Biography. <
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/congress/munozrivera.html>>.

⁴ Muñoz Rivera, Luis. "Una visita al Indian School," Revista de genealogía puertorriqueña. 1:2, 2000.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Rivera-Tudó, Angela. (Translation by Vilma Irrizary) "The Puerto Rican Indians." La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico. January 3, 1931: 4.

⁷ Ibid. The article came to my hands thru the generous help of Dr. Vilma Irrizary.

⁸ Osuna, Juan José. "An Indian in Spite of Myself," Summer School Review, Vol. X, No. 5, 1932.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Familia Grana. Mojica Website. <http://famgrana.homestead.com/raicesytruncos.html>

¹² Duchesne, Dr. Juan Dr. Personal E-mail to author.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dabán Family website.
<http://www3.primushost.com/~ginorio/garriga/Urrutia/urrutia.htm>.

¹⁵ Reilly, Peter. Personal E-mail to autor.

¹⁶ Urrutia, Jorge. Personal E-mail to autor.

¹⁷ Musignac, Neeliemar. Personal E-mail to autor.

¹⁸ Silvestrini Blanca, et al. Historia de Puerto Rico. Ediciones Cultural Panamericana, 1992: 386.

¹⁹ Report of the Governor of Puerto Rico, 1909. NARA.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bush, Mitchell. Video, Carlisle Cemetery Marker Ceremony. September 1, 2003.

²² Marker in front of Carlisle Indian School Cemetery. Carlisle, PA.

Author

Sonia Migdalia Rosa holds a Masters degree in Spanish Literature from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez with a specialty in Puerto Rican Literature. Her dissertation was titled: *Acercamiento a los mitos y leyendas taínos en Puerto Rico y el Caribe*. (Approaching Taíno myths and legends in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean). Her book titled *Los Mitos Taínos: Espejo de los mitos de América*, (*The Taíno Myths” Mirror of the American myths*) will be available soon. Sonia resides in northern Virginia where she greatly enjoys being an educator, writer, and independent researcher.

First draft submitted: 30 October 2003

Revised version: 17 November 2003

Published: 28 December 2003

Citation

Please cite this article as follows, including paragraph numbers if necessary:

Rosa, Sonia M. (2003). The Puerto Ricans at Carlisle Indian School. [58 paragraphs] *KACIKE: The Journal of Caribbean Amerindian History and Anthropology* [On-line Journal]. Available at: <http://kacikejournal.wordpress.com/soniarosa/> [Date of access: Day, Month, Year].

© 2003. Sonia M. Rosa, *KACIKE*. All photographs provided by courtesy of Sonia M. Rosa, unless otherwise indicated. All rights reserved.
